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ACTION ARA-14

BUENOS 03958 91 OF 112

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SS-15 SP-02 PRS-01 HA-05 H-01
INR-07 INRE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-02 /146 W
-----122593 231743Z /44

C 231659Z NOV 77
FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3415

SECTION 1 OF 2 BUENOS AIRES 3053

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: OVIP (VANCE, CYRUS)
SUBJECT: ARGENTINE GOVERNMENT (MFA-ARLIA) IN A RAGE
OVER PRESS ACCOUNTS OF A "LIST OF 7,500"

REF: STATE 292605

SUMMARY: THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS HAS EXPRESSED
SHARP DISPLEASURE TO THE EMBASSY OVER PRESS STORIES
COMING AT THE TIME OF THE SECRETARY'S VISIT TO THE
EFFECT THAT MR. VANCE HAS PRESENTED TO THE ARGENTINE
GOVERNMENT A LIST OF SOME 7,500 PERSONS WHO HAVE
EITHER DISAPPEARED OR BEEN DETAINED WITHOUT DUE
PROCESS. THE MINISTRY ISSUED TELEGRAPHIC
INSTRUCTIONS ON NOVEMBER 24 TO ALL ARGENTINE
DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS AND REPRESENTATIONS AT
INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS TO DENY THE LIST'S
PRESENTATION -- EVEN IF IT BECOMES NECESSARY FOR
MISSIONS TO BUY NEWSPAPER SPACE TO MAKE THIS
ANNOUNCEMENT. OUR REPLY THAT SECRETARY VANCE HAD
TOLD FOREIGN MINISTER MONTES THAT A LIST OF MORE OR
LESS THIS DESCRIPTION WOULD SHORTLY BE PRESENTED
IN USUAL DIPLOMATIC CHANNELS MADE NO IMPRESSION, MAKING APPARENT THAT
WHAT HAS RILED MFA IS IN FACT PRESS COMMENT ON A SOMBER THEME WHICH
DIMINISHES AN IMAGE OF THE SECRETARY'S VISIT THE ARGENTINES SEEK
TO CREATE. END SUMMARY.

ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)

U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/IPS

Margaret P. Grafeld, Director

(☒) Release () Excise () Deny

Exemption(s):

Declassify: () In Part (☒) In Full

() Classify as () Extend as () Downgrade to

Date Declassify on Reason

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IN FORCOUNSELOR AND PRESS OFFICER WERE ORDERED TO MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AFTERNOON ON NOVEMBER 25 TO MEETING ON PRESS HANDLING OF SECRETARY VANCE'S VISIT IN GENERAL AND ON HANDLING THE "LIST OF 7,500" SUBJECT IN PARTICULAR. ARGENTINE PARTICIPANTS JUAN CARLOS ARLIA (FOREIGN OFFICE WORKING GROUP ON HUMAN RIGHTS) AND CAPTAIN ROBERTO PEREZ FROIO (OF MFA'S PRESS SECTION) DELIVERED BLISTERING SERMONS ON WHAT THEY PROFESSED TO BELIEVE WERE DELIBERATE ATTEMPTS BY JOURNALISTS TO UNDERMINE THE SUCCESS OF THE SECRETARY'S VISIT. NORTH AMERICAN AFFAIRS DIRECTOR ESPECHE GIL ALSO ATTENDED THE HOUR LONG SESSION.

2. THE STAGE HAD BEEN SET FOR THE MEETING BY PEREZ FROIO'S FULMINATIONS WITH PRESS OFFICER O'BRIEN (BUENOS AIRES 9893), AND BY TELEPHONE CALL MADE DURING THE MORNING OF NOVEMBER 25 BY ARLIA TO DCM. PEREZ FROIO DISCLAIMED ANY OFFICIAL CONTENT IN HIS EARLIER ATTACK AGAINST THE WASHINGTON POST'S DE YOUNG AND THE NY TIMES DE ONIS, EXPLAINING AT CONSIDERABLE LENGTH THAT NEVERTHELESS HE STOOD BY HIS EARLIER EXPRESSIONS (PERSONAL EXPRESSIONS, THAT IS) OF DISMAY AT THOSE REPORTERS' APPARENT GOAL OF WRECKING BILATERAL RELATIONS. ARLIA DESCRIBED AN OPPOSITE SITUATION: HIS HARD WORDS FOR THE POST AND TIMES STORIES, AND OF OTHER COVERAGE AS WELL, WAS AN OFFICIAL ACT OF HIS MINISTRY CLARIFIED WELL IN ADVANCE. NEITHER ARLIA NOR PEREZ FROIO WAS AWARE OF THE OTHER'S REMARKS TO US.

3. THE ISSUE THAT HAD REALLY RILED ARLIA, HOWEVER, WAS THE OF THE "LIST OF 7,500" PERSONS WHICH PRESS REPORTS DESCRIBED AS HAVING BEEN DELIVERED TO THE ARGENTINE GOVERNMENT PRESUMABLY DURING THE SECRETARY'S STAY HERE. NO SUCH LIST HAD BEEN DELIVERED, ARLIA SAID, NOR WOULD ANY LIST BE ACCEPTABLE WERE IT TO CALL UPON GOA FOR A SPECIFIC ACTION OR IMPLY A SPECIFIC

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4. WE REPLIED THAT THE SECRETARY HAD DISCUSSED A LIST OF PERSONS MISSING OR IMPRISONED, PREPARED BY PRIVATE GROUPS IN THE U.S. AND HAVING NO OFFICIAL CHARACTER, WITH FOREIGN MINISTER MONTES. THE SECRETARY HAD SAID TO MONTES, AND MONTES DID NOT DEMUR, THAT THE LISTS WOULD BE SUBMITTED "TEROUGH USUAL DIPLOMATIC CHANNELS." COURTESY COPIES OF THE SIZEABLE LIST HAD BEEN XEROXED, WE SAID, AND HAD BEEN DELIVERED EARLIER THE SAME DAY (NOVEMBER 25) UNDER COVER OF AN AIDE-MEMOIRE. (AS EVENTS ACTUALLY WOULD HAVE IT THE PACKET WAS RETURNED BY MFA FOR DELIVERY ON MONDAY NOVEMBER 26 FOR THE PEDESTRIAL BUT TRUTHFUL REASON THAT MFA DOES NOT RECEIVE DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENCE IN THE AFTERNOON.)

5. THIS EXPLANATION MADE NO IMPACT ON ARLIA. AS HIS

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FIG-21 BUENOS 03958 02 OF 02 231703Z
ACTION 031-140

INFO OCT-31 ISO-00 SS-15 SP-02 PRS-31 HA-05 H-01
INR-07 NSCE-00 SSO-00 INRE-00 /342 W
-----122646 231745Z /46

C 231503Z NOV 77
FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3416

SECTION 2 OF 2 BUENOS AIRES 9958

FULMINATIONS CONTINUED IT BECAME CLEAR THAT WEAT IN FACT HAD SET OFF ARLIA AND APPARENTLY A NUMBER OF HIS MFA COLLEAGUES IS THE FACT OF SUCH AN "UNFORTUNATE" DOCUMENT'S HAVING BEEN GIVEN CELEBRITY EVEN BEFORE THE SECRETARY'S VISIT, AS WELL AS AGAIN DURING IT, BY THE U.S. PRESS. THE MINISTRY HAS, WE LEARNED, SENT A CIRCULAR TELEGRAM TO ALL ARGENTINE DIPLOMATIC POSTS AND MISSIONS BEFORE INTERNATIONAL BODIES INSTRUCTING THEM TO CHARACTERIZE AS A LIE ANY PRESS REPORTS OF A LIST PRESENTED OF DISAPPEARED OR ELIMINATED PERSONS. THE INSTRUCTION ALSO REQUIRES POSTS TO DISCLAIM NOTICES OF AN ARGENTINE BLACKLIST OF ARTISTS, WHICH HARKS TO AN ARTICLE PUBLISHED IN THE WASHINGTONPOST BY KAREN DE YOUNG ON NOVEMBER 20. BUENOS AIRES PAPERS CARRIED THE GOVERNMENT'S DISCLAIMER ON NOVEMBER 20 -- WITH ONLY THE "HERALD" STORY GIVING A FINAL PARAGRAPH STATING FULL CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE LIST'S PRESENTATION.

2. TO OUR SUGGESTIONS THAT TOGETHER WE SEARCH U.S. PUBLIC RECORDS (WE HAD IN MIND THE TRATTNER NOVEMBER 21 PRESS BRIEFING SESSION) TO DISCOVER HOW ANY MIS-REPRESENTATION OF THE LIST COULD HAVE COME ABOUT ARLIA SAID THAT AS AN ARTICLE OF FAITH IT WAS UNIMAGINABLE TO HIM THAT A RESPONSIBLE U.S. OFFICIAL COULD HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO THIS MISUNDERSTANDING -- BUT THAT IF BY CHANCE SUCH A THING HAD TAKEN PLACE IT WAS AS WELL BE NOT LEARN OF IT, FOR HE WOULD BE FORCED TO SOMBER CONCLUSIONS. "HOW WAS IT POSSIBLE," HE ASKED, "FOR MISCHIEVOUS PERSONS TO UNDO THE FINE WORK MRS. DERIAN AND I DID TOGETHER IN PHRASING THE

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HUMAN RIGHTS PORTION OF THE JOINT STATEMENT? PEPEZ FROIC
AT THIS POINT ROSE TO STATE HIS BELIEF THAT SOME KIND OF
PLOT EXISTS TO WRECK BILATERAL RELATIONS.

7. FINAL POINT MADE BY THE ARGENTINES WAS THE GOA FEELS
OBLIGATED ALWAYS TO CORRECT ANY JOURNALIST'S STORY WHEN A
GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL IS QUOTED AND A REPORT IS INCORRECT. ARLIA
AT FIRST ASKED FOR SUCH GALLANTRY FROM OURSELVES, BUT THEN
WITHDREW HIS REQUEST. AT ANOTHER POINT HE REFERRED TO THE NEED
OF TAKING STEPS TO COUNTER PRESS ONSLAUGHTS AGAINST GOOD
BILATERAL RELATIONS BETWEEN ANY COUNTRIES.

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8. WE STOOD PAT WITH OUR EXPLANATION OF THE LIST'S ORIGINS
AND PRESENTATION, AND STATED THAT IF ASKED REGARDING THE LIST
WE EXPECTED TO QUOTE FROM OUR AIDE-MEMOIRE, WHICH CAREFULLY
SETS OUT THE OPINION WE HAVE OF THE REPORT AND OUR
INTENTIONS IN PRESENTING IT. (AIDE-MEMOIRE TEXT,
WHICH FOLLOWS CIRCUMSTANCES DESCRIBED REFTEL, BEING
SENT SEPARATELY.)
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